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Mengele reward stirs new energy for pursuit

By John Holmes
 THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Washington Times' offer of a \$1 million reward for the apprehension, trial and conviction of Nazi war criminal Josef Mengele yesterday was praised by congressmen and human rights supporters as "a great service to humanity" and a "resonant affirmation of decency."

Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., saluted The Times for its offer, and Nathan Perlmutter, national director of the B'nai Brith Anti-Defamation League, said it was "reassuring" to see "a paper of the stature of The Washington Times" make such a gesture.

"It's an important new development in the Mengele case," said Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Wiesenthal Center for the documentation of Nazi war crimes, which is based in Los Angeles and named for the famous Nazi hunter.

"I have maintained that Mengele does not exist in a vacuum, that on a daily basis he meets people, talks to people and goes places," he continued. "Unfortunately, he lives in a part of the world where fear is a basic ingredient of life and, without incentives, those people who know his whereabouts are never likely to talk about him. Certainly The Washington Times' offer is an added incentive."

The Times' reward, guaranteed by an insurance policy, is the third such large reward offered for Mengele's capture and conviction. The

West German state government of Hesse has offered one million marks (approximately \$300,000), and the Simon Wiesenthal Center for the documentation of Nazi war crimes put up its own \$1 million reward last month.

Reaction to the offer, announced by Editor-in-Chief Arnaud de Borchgrave yesterday, was positive and strong.

"It's been non-stop. I've gotten calls from all over the world," said Mr. De Borchgrave, who said he was "a little surprised" at the intensity of the response.

The newspaper made the offer because "I had a choice of doing this or springing 12 of my best reporters, knowing they'd come back in six months with the real story," Mr. de Borchgrave explained. "But I can't spare 12 of my best reporters."

"It's a welcome development," said Victor Harel, a spokesman for the Israeli Embassy and one of the first to react to The Times' announcement. "Every effort that can be made by the international community to bring to justice such a criminal will be doing a great service to humanity."

The paper's offer "puts additional pressure on Mengele, wherever he is, and makes his life unbearable," Mr. Harel said. He added that he was glad to hear of the reward because Mengele's case "should remain in the headlines and in the public attention."

Similar support was offered by Sen. Kennedy. "I commend The Washington Times for its initiative in the search for Mengele," he said. "I hope the Voice of America is on the air today giving worldwide publicity to The Times' reward. . . . In this 40th anniversary year of the liberation of Auschwitz, the time has come to find Mengele, wherever he may be, and bring him to justice for his hideous crimes against humanity."

Mr. Kennedy and Rep. Robert J. Mrazek, D-N.Y., have urged Congress to pass legislation that would authorize the federal government to offer a substantial reward for the

capture and conviction of Mengele. Mr. Kennedy has written to the Senate Appropriations Committee to ask that the measure be included in a bill, a spokesman said yesterday.

Mr. Kennedy's sentiments were echoed by Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, R-N.Y., who called The Times' gesture "an excellent idea."

"Anything to further the cause, to further the search for and seizure of Mengele is all for the better," said Sen. D'Amato, one of the senators most active in seeking Nazi war criminals.

Attorney General Edwin Meese III cited the reward as "a further example of concern the people have in this country, which is reflected in our action. We have several of our agencies cooperating with other countries to locate and apprehend Mengele."

The Justice Department joined the search for Mengele last month after a former U.S. Army counter-intelligence officer said he believed that American intelligence services had arrested, questioned and released Mengele in Austria in 1947. Former Attorney General William French Smith initiated the investigation, which Mr. Meese, who succeeded him, has continued.

A spokesman for the West German Embassy said it had received no official word from Bonn on the matter yesterday. He noted, however, that "since our legal authorities have put out the reward, you can see we have every interest that Mengele can be found and tried."

"We appreciate the offer of this reward. It is a warm, resonant affirmation of decency," said Mr. Perlmutter of the Anti-Defamation League. "Over the decades, the concern with the apprehension of unspeakable beasts like Mengele has been lonely and anguished. To see a paper of the stature of The Washington Times do this is reassuring."

Rabbi Hier said some of the information the Wiesenthal Center has received since posting its reward "seems to be valuable," but he urged the newspaper to exercise care and patience in sifting through any information it receives.

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